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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

SEPTEMBER 1st, 1857.

HANDEL.

The New "Life of Handel," by VICTOR SCHÆLCHER,
and the Commemoration Festival at the Crystal Palace.

(Continued from page 90.)

Mr. Gardiner, in attempting to refute some of Mr. Townsend's statements, says:—"There can be no doubt that the *Messiah* was first performed in London. I learnt it from a conversation I had with Mr. Cradock, who told me that Mr. Mainwaring was present at the performance, and that at the end of the second part he heard Handel call out, 'Go to the Hallelujah!' This originally was the finishing chorus," &c. Mr. Gardiner repeats this in a letter to the *Dublin Daily Express*, of the 14th of June, 1853, adding that Cradock "had the fact from Dr. Mainwaring himself." It is certain that Cradock, in his *Literary and Miscellaneous Memoirs*, speaks of Mainwaring several times, and calls him "my much honoured friend;" but in truth he quotes his friend without much authority. In his own memoirs, the editor, Nichols, says in a note, "Mainwaring also published anonymously a life of Handel (8vo, 1760). He died at Cambridge in April, 1807, aged seventy-two, and was succeeded as professor by the learned Dr. Marsh." The same note is also to be found in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*. John Mainwaring was therefore *six years old* at the time (1741) when he witnessed that dramatic scene of "Go to the Hallelujah!" And the memory of this child of six years becomes all the more surprising when we find that, on arriving at a reasonable age, he fixes the first performance of the *Messiah*, the particulars of which he so well recollected, at the 12th of April, 1741, which is more than four months before Handel had written a note of it.

Mr. Hogarth also supports the assertion as to the first performance being in London during September, 1741:—"The MS.," says he, "bears 'fine dell' oratorio 7bre 12th,' and below is written 'ausgefüllt den 14 dieses,' that is to say, performed on the 14th." It has been pointed out, however, that the meaning of the word *ausgefüllt* is not *performed*, but *filled up, completed*. Handel, in composing, only wrote the subject and the bass, then he filled up the orchestration afterwards. It was this last operation which he noted, with his habitual and minute exactness, by the word "*ausgefüllt*," *filled up*. If he had intended to signify that it was *performed*, he would have written *ausgeführt*. One is only astonished that musicians, like Mr. Hogarth and M. Fétis (who repeats the same thing) did not reflect upon the physical impossibility of mounting such a work in two days. The rectified translation of the word "*ausgefüllt*" is confirmed by another proof, taken from the MSS. At the end of *Berenice* we find "fine dell' opera, January 18th, 1737;" and below "*ausgufüllen*," which signifies *to be filled up*, and lower still, "*geendiget den 27th January, 1737*," that is to say, *finished on the 27th of January*.

And to the preceding may be added the personal deposition of Dr. Quin, of Dublin, who knew Handel when he visited Ireland. "The *Messiah*," he says, "I am thoroughly convinced, was performed in Dublin for the first time, and with the greatest applause. Mrs. Cibber and Signora Avolio were the principal

performers. These, with the assistance of the choristers of St. Patrick's Cathedral and Christ Church, formed the vocal band; and Dubourg, with several good instrumental performers, composed a very respectable orchestra." The details of this testimony, which was given in 1788, being all proved to be exact (by authentic documents discovered since), give great credibility to the principal statement.

One word more. The *Daily Advertiser* of the 31st of March, 1743, contains some verses upon the *Messiah*, which will presently be quoted. The insertion of these verses on the 31st of March, 1743, is another proof in support of my opinion, for it perfectly corresponds with the three performances of that year; and it is to be remarked, that the author of the verses calls them, "Extempore on Mr. Handel's New Oratorio." Certainly, if the work had made its appearance in 1741, the defender of Handel would not have qualified it as "*new*," in 1743.

There is no longer any doubt, therefore, that the *Messiah* was performed for the first time at Dublin, in 1742, and that it was *not*, as has been a thousand times asserted, produced in London in 1741.

I shall return to the Life of Handel in the following chapter; but for the present, I propose to follow the history of the *Messiah*. On his return to the English capital, Handel gave it three times at Covent Garden, during the season of 1743, on the 23rd, the 25th, and the 29th of March. At that time, and up to 1749, he announced it by no other title than "a sacred oratorio." Some say that he adopted that designation "because the words are taken literally from the Holy Scriptures." This cannot be so; because he had not concealed the name at Dublin, and *Israel in Egypt*, which is in the same case, always appeared under its real title. He was afraid, we must believe, lest by the assistance of the powerful enemies which were banded against him, the hypocrites might be able to arouse some scandal on seeing the name of the *Messiah* upon a play-bill. But if so, the precaution did not save him; for we still can discover traces of this new obstacle which was raised up against him. The *Daily Advertiser* of the 31st of March, 1743, contains the following lines:—

"Wrote extempore by a Gentleman, on reading the *Universal Spectator*, on Mr. Handel's new oratorio, performed at the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden.

"Cease, zealots, cease to blame these heavenly lays,
For seraphs fit to sing *Messiah's* praise,
Nor for your trivial argument assign
The theatre not fit for praise divine!
These hallow'd lays to music give new grace,
To virtue awe, and sanctify the place,
To harmony like *his* celestial pow'r is given,
To exalt the soul from earth, and make of hell a heaven."

The *Universal Spectator*, which I have not been able to consult, had evidently accused the composer of sacrilege at least, and Handel had perhaps been compelled to retreat before the outcries of false devotees. Many years afterwards, when he was master of the situation, he returned to the Dublin form of announcement, as in the *General Advertiser* for the 23rd of March, 1749—"At the Theatre Royal in Covent Garden, this day, will be performed a sacred oratorio called *Messiah*, with a concerto." From that moment the journals announced the masterpiece under its own name.

However great may have been the enthusiasm at its first performance, it must be confessed that the "Sacred Oratorio" does not appear to have overcome at once in London the resistance of the old prejudices which were opposed to the composer. Performed on the

23rd, the 25th, and the 29th of March, 1743, it did not make its appearance in 1744, and was only included among the performances of 1745, on the 9th and the 11th of April; after which it was heard of no more until 1749. Performances so infrequent, and a suspension so prolonged, indicate an incredible amount of coolness on the part of the public. Is not this what Mainwaring and Hawkins meant when they spoke of the failure of the *Messiah*? It is certain that the complete triumph of this work does not date further back than the 12th of April, 1750, when it was performed for the seventh time at Covent Garden. Perhaps also, it would be more just to accuse the bigots of conspiracy than the town of want of taste. We have seen that they raised a great outcry against bringing the *Passion* upon the stage. It may be that Handel was obliged to conceal his masterpiece in order to avoid their declamations, which would only have supplied his enemies with new arms against him; it may be that he waited until the progress of the times and the advance of reason should come to his aid. What is stronger to fight against than the prejudice of ignorance; or what more difficult to overcome than the spirit of misplaced zeal!

The *Messiah*, which Herder called "a Christian epopee in musical sounds," offers yet another singularity, namely, that it did not altogether give satisfaction to Charles Jennens, the author of the libretto. This person, writing to one of his friends a letter, dated "Gopsall, 30th of August, 1745," says—"I shall show you a collection I gave Handel, called *Messiah*, which I value highly, and he has made a fine entertainment of it, though not so good as he might and ought to have done. I have with great difficulty made him correct some of the grossest faults in the composition. But he retained his overture obstinately, in which there are some passages far unworthy of Handel, but much more unworthy of the *Messiah*." What a curious example of the relations which exist between contemporaries! Is it not amusing to find Mr. Jennens, rich and cultivated as he may have been, taking this tone upon himself, and treating in this manner a work which is loftier than the Pyramids? Is it not astonishing that he should presume to talk of "gross faults" in the compositions of Handel?

Gross faults apart, the *Messiah* is universally recognized as the masterpiece of the master. Whoever has listened to his music will admit that its most distinctive character is the sublime. No one, without exception, neither Beethoven nor Mozart, has ever risen nearer to the grandeur of the ideal than Handel did, and he was never more sublime than in the *Messiah*. And, remembering this, read the dates, which are inscribed with his own hand upon the manuscript:—

"Commenced on the 22nd of August, 1741.

End of the first part, on the 28th of August.

End of the second, on the 6th of September.

End of the third, on the 12th of September, 1741.

Filled up [that is to say, orchestrated] on the 14th."

This superhuman work was therefore accomplished in twenty-three days! And Handel was then fifty-six years old!

Handel made many retouches in the *Messiah*. Dr. Rimbault has given an analysis of the different changes in his preface to the edition for the Handel Society.* Those who read these technical details will perceive that the great man did not spare his labour in perfecting his most successful works.

It is to be noted, that Handel drew the movements

of four choruses in this oratorio ("His yoke is easy," "He shall purify," "For unto us," "All we like sheep") from two Italian chamber duets, which he had composed a month previously. The duet, "O Death! where is thy sting?" is also partly drawn from another chamber duet, "Se tu non lasci amore."

The Commemoration of 1784, at which the *Messiah* was performed twice, seems to have given it a new splendour. Its popularity became so great, that the Rev. John Newton published two enormous octavo volumes of sermons, under the title of "*Messiah*; Fifty Expository Discourses on the series of *scriptural passages* which form the subject of the celebrated ORATORIO of Handel, preached in the years 1784 and 1785, in the Parish Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard Street." The preacher confesses, nevertheless, that he knew nothing of "the celebrated oratorio." He says, *apropos* of the air, "He will dash them in pieces," that he had been "informed" that the music of this passage was so well adapted to the idea which it expressed, that it made the hearer tremble with fear.

This is almost the only direct mention which he makes of the work. Why then so many sermons upon such a pretext? This question is answered by a few words in the introduction to the first volume, in which the reverend author declares:—"Such a plan has lately and rather unexpectedly occurred to me; conversation in almost every company, for some time past, having much turned upon the Commemoration of Handel, and particularly his oratorio of the *Messiah*." It is clear that the worthy man made use of a fashion of the day, in order to attract a greater amount of attention upon his sermons and his book.

The *Messiah* has remained the most popular of oratorios: I am almost tempted to say it forms part of the religion of England. It is never announced in anything like a fitting manner without attracting the public. It invariably forms part of the programme at all the festivals, and the day on which it is performed is always the most productive.

This oratorio is almost as widely spread over Germany as over England; it has been translated there for sixty years, and has been frequently published. At every festival in that country it has a leading place. It is also performed at New York and at Boston, where an American edition has been published. I have a newspaper from Melbourne, in Australia, which announces the *Messiah* for "the third concert of the Philharmonic Society." It is only in France that this oratorio is unknown!

Minute details of some few of the many occasions on which Handel's *Messiah* has been performed in the interests of Charity are given by Mr. Schœlcher:—

Seeing that the *Messiah* was, as they say in theatrical parlance, "a sure draw," Handel in a manner divided his property in it with the Hospital; he gave that institution a copy of the score, and promised to come and conduct it every year for the benefit of the good work. This gift was the occasion of an episode in which may be perceived the choleric humour of the worthy donor. The administrators of the Hospital, being desirous of investing his intentions with a legal form, prepared a petition to Parliament, which terminated in the following manner:—"That in order to raise a further sum for the benefit of the said charity, George Frederick Handel, Esq., hath been charitably pleased to give to this corporation a composition of music, called 'The Oratorio of the *Messiah*,' composed by him; the said George Frederick Handel reserving

* See an important note in Schœlcher, page 264.

to himself only the liberty of performing the same for his own benefit during his life: And whereas, the said benefaction cannot be secured to the sole use of your petitioners except by the authority of Parliament, your petitioners therefore humbly pray that leave may be given to bring in a bill for the purposes aforesaid." When one of the governors waited upon the musician with this form of petition, he soon discovered that the Committee of the Hospital had built on a wrong foundation; for Handel, bursting into a rage, exclaimed—"Te Devil! for vat sal de Foundling put mein oratorio in de Parlement!—Te Devil! mein music sal not go to de Parlement."

The petition went no further; but Handel did not the less fulfil the pious engagement which he had contracted.

Altogether, the *Messiah* alone brought into the funds of the Foundling Hospital no less a sum than £10,299.

Let it be remarked that the *Messiah*, *Judas Macchabæus*, and *Samson* were the most popular oratorios during the life of the author; he produced the first thirty-four times, the second thirty-four times also, and the third thirty times. But in the thirty-four representations of the *Messiah*, the eleven for the Foundling Hospital are included. Handel, therefore, only performed it twenty-three times for his own benefit. It is even to be remarked, that from the year 1753 he did not give more than eleven performances in each year. One might imagine that he had imposed upon himself the rule of giving only twelve, and that he wished to reserve the last for the Foundling Hospital. In this manner he diminished the benefits which he might have derived from his favourite work for himself, in order that the charitable institution might have the more advantage. How is it possible not to hold in affectionate veneration the memory of a man in whose life we discover such facts! To sympathize with human misery when we find it under our very eyes is natural and almost instinctive, a momentary sacrifice for the relief of a sufferer is so easy; but a continued sacrifice is difficult, and it must be founded upon a rational idea of duty, since it imposes upon us daily privations. For this reason, nothing is more worthy of our respect than this charity of Handel, which lasted for years, of which he never was weary, which fed itself continually like a miraculous inextinguishable flame.

Of this composition, which remained unpublished for twenty years, more copies have been printed than of any other musical work, by any other master, in any country in the world. It has now reached the almost fabulous number of forty-three editions, thirty-three in England and ten in other countries. I have had great difficulty in collecting them all, of which a detailed list will be given in the "Catalogue," not merely for the satisfaction of a bibliographical curiosity, but as an interesting document in the history of music. There are very few literary works, of whatever nature, which can boast of an equal success, and yet there are two or three thousand readers of books against one who can read a musical score. It is undoubtedly one of Great Britain's proudest boasts, that a composition which has enjoyed such immense and universal success should be set to English words.

JUDAS MACCABÆUS.

The war with the Pretender incontestably gave occasion to one of the masterpieces of this *vir probus*—*Judas Macchabæus*—which was written in thirty-two days (between the 9th of July and the 11th of August, 1746), and was produced at Covent Garden on the 1st

of April, during the season of 1747. This oratorio was demanded from the composer by Frederick Prince of Wales, to celebrate the return of his not very much beloved brother, the Duke of Cumberland, who, on the 16th of April, 1746, had won the decisive battle of Culloden.

Handel pointed out the subject to Thomas Morell. A passage in the handbook furnishes a new proof that he used his poems very cavalierly. At the entrance of the Messenger in the third act, it is stated:—"Several incidents were introduced here by way of messenger and chorus, in order to make the story more complete; but it was thought they would make the performance too long, and therefore were not set, and therefore not printed; this being designed not as a finished poem, but merely as an oratorio." Morell understood what was his part. He knew that a libretto should be entirely made for the music, and that it has only a secondary place in the collaboration of the poet and the composer. Handel, for his part, was perfectly convinced of this truth, and did not disquiet himself much about "making the story more complete," when, by doing so, the music would have been rendered less clear. We often found in his manuscripts words of recitatives written below the staves without notes; and we may infer from this that he wrote in advance, more or less of the recitatives which he was composing, and that in this last operation he passed over whatever he judged to be too lengthy.

However little importance Morell attached to his *Judas Macchabæus*, he dedicated it to the conqueror in these words:—"To His Royal Highness Prince William, Duke of Cumberland, this faint portraiture of a truly wise, valiant, and virtuous commander, as to the possessor of the like noble qualities, is, with most profound respect and veneration, inscribed by His Royal Highness's most obedient and most devoted servant, the author." This is addressed to a man who pitilessly murdered as many prisoners after the battle as his courage had slain enemies during the combat. Will conquerors always be "wise and virtuous" in the eye of poets?

The political circumstances, as much as the sublimity of the composition, obtained for the new oratorio a success which has never deserted it. Handel himself performed it thirty-four times, and on the thirtieth occasion the receipts amounted to £400. The Jews contributed greatly to its popularity. Finding in it one of the finest episodes in their national history, they all went to hear it. It is still ranked, and justly so, beside the greatest works of the composer—*Israel*, *Samson*, and the *Messiah*.

The celebrated chorus, "See the conquering hero" (which has become one of the *pièces de resistance* for the Société des Concerts at Paris, by whom it is given every year), did not originally belong to *Judas*, but to *Joshua*. In the copy of *Judas*, in the Smith collection, this chorus is added; a proof that it did not form part of the oratorio at the beginning. It was printed for the first time by Walsh, in the edition of *Joshua*, which appeared a year after that of *Judas*. Randall, in engraving the two works at a later period, exclusively attributed it to *Joshua*. Arnold, who never discussed, extricated himself from the difficulty by putting it into both. Mr. Macfarren makes a great mistake when he affirms positively, in the preface to his edition of *Judas* for the Handel Society, that there is no original MS. of this chorus in existence; and all the observations which he founds upon that error fall of their own accord. There is no doubt that "See the conquering hero" is in the MS. of *Joshua*. It is not even a sul-

sequent addition, but is in its proper place, after the recitative, "In bloom of youth." It is addressed to the youthful Othniel, when he returns from the conquest of the city of Debir. *Judas Macchabæus* was revived on the 26th of February, 1748, and on the 1st of the following April it was announced "with additions." This performance of the 1st of April, 1748, was perhaps the anniversary of the festival of 1747, and it may be that "See the conquering hero," which had excited the enthusiasm of the audience in *Joshua* (which had been performed on the 9th of March, 1748), was one of the "additions." It was ever afterwards left in *Judas*, which never lost its attractions for the musical public.

Fortune acts as capriciously by the works of men as she does by men themselves. When she frowns upon a work, everything turns against it, and its beauties, however surpassing, are regarded by none. "O liberty, thou choicest treasure," with which Handel adorned *Judas Macchabæus* (already sufficiently rich), is one of the spoils of the *Occasional Oratorio*. It is exactly in its place, with its divine echo accompaniment on the violoncello, in the MS. of the *Occasional Oratorio*, and was engraved in the edition of the same, published by Walsh before that of *Judas*, where it did not appear. It is not to be found either in the original MS. of *Judas*, nor in the copy of that oratorio which is in the Smith collection, as was originally made. It was afterwards inserted in this copy by Handel himself, who wrote it at full length with his own hand, as well as the recitative by which he causes it to be preceded, "To heaven's immortal King." The sublime copyist marked it for "Israelite woman," and at the end he has written, "Segue l'aria: 'Come, ever-smiling liberty.'"

Dr. Morell, who had written the words of that air for *Judas Macchabæus*, and who has left it in the handbook of his poem, observes parenthetically, with pleasant indifference, "the following air was designed and wrote for that place, but it got, I know not how, into the *Occasional Oratorio*, and was there incomparably set as finely executed." This even leads one to believe that the unknown compiler of the *Occasional Oratorio* may be this same philosophic Morell. Although Handel always did as he pleased with his poems, one cannot imagine that if it were otherwise he would have effected such a fusion. It is even a strong measure to have dealt in this manner by two works of the same author.

MUSIC

AMONG THE POETS AND POETICAL WRITERS.

By MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Continued from page 79.)

"Awake, Æolian lyre, awake,
And give to rapture all thy trembling strings.
From Helicon's harmonious springs
A thousand rills their mazy progress take:
The laughing flowers, that round them blow,
Drink life and fragrance as they flow.
Now the rich stream of music winds along,
Deep, majestic, smooth, and strong,
Through verdant vales, and Ceres' golden reign:
Now rolling down the steep again,
Headlong, impetuous, see it pour;
The rocks and nodding groves re-bellow to the roar.
O sovereign of the willing soul!
Parent of sweet and solemn-breathing airs,
Enchanting shell! the sullen cares,
And frantic passions, hear thy soft controul."—Gray.

"A certain music, never known before,
Here lull'd the pensive melancholy mind;
Full easily obtain'd: behoves no more,
But sidelong, to the gently-waving wind,
To lay the well-tun'd instrument reclin'd;
From which, with airy-flying fingers light,
Beyond each mortal touch the most refin'd,
The god of winds drew sounds of deep delight:
Whence, with just cause, the harp of Æolus it hight.

Ah me! what hand can touch the string so fine?
Who up the lofty diapason roll
Such sweet, such sad, such solemn airs divine,
Then let them down again into the soul?
Now rising love they fann'd; now pleasing dole
They breath'd, in tender musings, through the heart;
And now a graver, sacred strain they stole,
As when seraphic hands a hymn impart:
Wild-warbling nature all, above the reach of art."

Thomson.

"And that simplest lute,
Placed length-ways in the clasping casement, hark!
How by the desultory breeze caressed,
Like some coy maid half yielding to her lover,
It pours such sweet upbraiding, as must needs
Tempt to repeat the wrong! And now, its strings
Boldlier swept, the long sequacious notes
Over delicious surges sink and rise,
Such a soft floating witchery of sound
As twilight Elfin's make, when they at eve
Voyage on gentle gales from Fairy-Land,
Where melodies round honey-dropping flowers,
Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise,
Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!
O the one life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
A light in sound, a sound like power in light,
Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere—
Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument."—Coleridge.

"That as a harp obeyeth to the hand,
And maketh sound after his fingering,
Right so may you out of my heart bring
Such voice right as you list to laugh or pain."

Chaucer.

"'Yes,' said the supreme shape,
'Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up
Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side,
Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast
Unwearied ear of the whole universe
Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth
Of such new tuneful wonder.'"—Keats.

Mortals are said to be:—

"Like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last."—Shelley.

"For as we see, upon the lute or like instrument, a ground, though it be sweet and have show of many changes, yet breaketh not the hand to such strange and hard stops and passages, as a set song or voluntary; much after the same manner was the diversity between a philosophical and a civil life."—Bacon.

"The answer of Apollonius to Vespasian is full of excellent instruction. Vespasian asked him, what was Nero's

(Continued on page 113.)